

Blind & Visually Impaired Education Task Force
Smyrna School District Office, Board Room
March 10, 2015

Task Force Members in Attendance: Susan Campbell, Sharon Coutu-Donovan, Karen Degler, Bethany Hall-Long, Debbie Harrington, Kevin Hensley, Sonya Lawrence, Lisa Lawson, Daniel Madrid, Kevin McAllister, Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Keith Morton, Dorothe Mumford, Dave Lawson, Bill Reece, Ron Russo, Lloyd Schmitz, Thea Suchodolski, Matthew Tseronis

Others in Attendance: Jackie Armstrong, Debbie Briddell, Sarah Celestin, Darlene Cole, Staci Forrest, Casey Gore, Dawn Jackson, Jerry Petroff, Tanner Polce, Neil Semmel

Welcome & Introductions – Sen. Hall-Long

- Thanked members who are serving on the task force
- Reviewed charge to make recommendations to better support students who are blind or visually impaired
- During introductions, task force members stated what they would like to see from the task force including:
 - Review of a comprehensive system of supports
 - Simplifying system for supports/services
 - Meeting student needs in a timely manner
 - Providing services for students in a smoother, well-defined way
 - Changing student to teacher ratio to align with best practices
 - Addressing assistive technology needs
 - Developing a meaningful report to help students become engaged citizens
 - Improve service delivery
 - Improve collaboration between schools and agencies
 - Provide clarity on roles and expectations
 - Improve understanding and access to resources

Legislative Charge, Today's Objective, Meeting Norms and Procedures – Jerry Petroff, Task Force Facilitator

- Charged with reporting to the legislature by June 1 on the following topics:
 - Administrative structure and authority of the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) in regards to education
 - DVI's funding sources designated for use in educating students in the State of Delaware
 - Appropriate educational services delivery model
 - Disposition of the resource rooms in New Castle, Kent & Sussex Counties
 - Assistive technology provisions
 - Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students who are blind or visually impaired
 - Post-secondary transition planning and programming
- Meeting objective to establish a “good beginning” by articulating the focus of the task force to assure that measurable outcomes are achieved

- Meeting Norms were defined including: participation, presence, minimizing side bars, kind to presenters, start and end on time, focus on problem solving, positive interaction behaviors
- Quorum was defined
 - Action items will require a majority vote of task force membership
 - Simple decisions for the purposes of moving the Task Force agenda forward or that do not influence final recommendations will use a majority of members present at the meeting

Division for the Visually Impaired Overview – Dan Madrid, Director, DVI

- Reviewed organization structure of DVI as well as educational services provided
- Stated regulations related to administrative structure and authority of DVI
- Discussed student enrollment data and population demographics
 - Task force members requested additional data from DVI & DOE regarding enrollment
- Explained Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI) service delivery models – direct and consultative services
- Reviewed data on the primary learning styles of students related to print, Braille, pictures, objects, etc.
- Discussed student teacher ratios required by state regulations (28:1) compared to the current ratio (31:1), national average (15:1) and recommended ratio (10:1)
- Provided overview of funding sources – state and federal funds (IDEA) comprise DVI education budget
- Reviewed quality standards for related services staff and the provision of Assistive Technology
- Discussed DVI's role in IEP development including the use of evaluations, Braille goals/considerations and engagement of staff
- Outlined postsecondary requirements and best practices
- Brought up considerations for appropriate resource delivery models involving DHSS, DOE & LEAs with state funds, tuition based services, needs based funding and federal funds

Prioritizing the Charge - Identifying the Issues - Jerry Petroff, Task Force Facilitator

- Due to time constraints, prioritization was tabled
- A survey will be sent to task force members to gain feedback on issues

Public Comment

- While student to teacher ratio is a concern, the biggest issue is level of student need. We need a way to allocate resources based on student need.
- Concern about visual acuity cut-off for provision of services; some students may not qualify under current criteria but need support
- Concern about access to assistive technology; individual student concern related to the need for technology and access to materials

Summation and Adjourn – Sen. Hall-Long